



Proposal for a New Academic Program

Institution: University of Oregon

College/School: School of Journalism and Communication

Department/Program Name: Strategic Communication

Degree and Program Title: Master of Science in Immersive Media

1. Program Description

a. Proposed Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) number.

09.0702

b. Brief overview (1-2 paragraphs) of the proposed program, including its disciplinary foundations and connections; program objectives; programmatic focus; degree, certificate, minor, and concentrations offered.

The anticipated program would be a new one-year 46-credit online applied professional master's program in Immersive Media Communication (IMC) that strengthens the future of the School of Journalism and Communication and its program offerings. The program would be an excellent complement to the existing Strategic Communication and Multimedia Journalism master's programs and would also build on the work of the Oregon Reality Lab in Portland. Such a program will set us apart as innovators and leaders in the emergent communication technology landscape. We propose to create an entirely online program that will give students the skills they need to become communication strategists in the steadily evolving field of immersive media. It also differs from all other immersive curricula in that programs typically approach this from a game studies/design perspective or as research programs, heavy in laboratory experimentation. This program is designed to give graduate tools that will help them advise and lead teams currently being built to address the emergence of the metaverse, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented, virtual, and cross realities such as those found in gamespaces, in social media, and increasingly in the workplace.

c. Course of study – proposed curriculum, including course numbers, titles, and credit hours.

Core Courses

J 594 Strategic Communications Research	4
J 609 Terminal Project or J 604 Internship: [Topic]	6
J 611 Mass Communication and Society	4
J 629 Media and Communication Ethics: [Topic]	4

Immersive Media Courses

J 617 Strategic Communication Theory and Research: [Topic]	4
J664 Foundations in Immersive Media	4
J665 Media Psychology)	4
J667 User Experience	4
J668 Experiential Marketing	4
J669 Creating for Immersive Platforms	4

Elective Courses

J.624 Strategic Communication: [Topic]	4
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Total Credits 46

- d. **Manner in which the program will be delivered, including program location (if offered outside of the main campus), course scheduling, and the use of technology (for both on-campus and off-campus delivery).**

Online

- e. **Adequacy and quality of faculty delivering the program.**

Faculty Name	Faculty Classification and Rank	FTE	Role
Donna Davis	TT – Associate	1	Director
Daniel Pimentel	TT – Assistant	1	Faculty
Nikki Dunsire	NTT Protem	1	Faculty
Lisa Peyton	Career NTT, Instructional, Sr. Instructor 1	1	Faculty
Maxwell Foxma	TT – Assistant	1	Faculty
Amanda Cote	TT – Assistant	1	Faculty
Wes Pope	TT – Associate	1	Faculty

The faculty listed above are current faculty teaching across multiple programs within the SOJC who are either already teaching the courses we've been offering that will become core courses of this program and/or who have expressed a strong desire to teach in this program as it is in alignment with their research and teaching foci. We have also been in communication with a number of professionals in the immersive media landscape who have expressed a strong interest in teaching for this program as pro tem.

f. Adequacy of faculty resources – full-time, part-time, adjunct.

See e. above

g. Other staff.

Initially, no additional staff will be needed since we anticipate only 10 additional students coming into the SOJC-Portland programs via this pathway in the first year and admitting those students will be integrated through our existing recruiting, administrative, and support staff. As the program grows, we would anticipate working closely with our financial and administrative leaders to ensure the responsible growth of affiliated staff.

h. Adequacy of facilities, library, and other resources.

No additional facilities, equipment, or other resources are anticipated at this time. However, we are currently in communication with the UO Online program team with the possibility of developing an agreement that would assist in instructional design, instructor training, and potential recruitment support. This is a work in progress.

i. Anticipated start date.

Fall 2023

2. Relationship to Mission and Goals

a. Manner in which the proposed program supports the institution's mission, signature areas of focus, and strategic priorities.

In a commissioned study, market analysis by Hanover Research for the School of Journalism and Communication concluded, "Student and labor demand indicators for strategic communications are strong, particularly in the online space. Though immersive media is a new field for which data is limited, the industry is expected to grow, and UO Portland has the opportunity to be one of the first movers in the region." Since this analysis, the field has experienced enormous growth, yet to our knowledge, there is still no master's degree in communication with a focus on the strategic use of immersive technologies. The IMC program could thus truly be the first of its kind. Additionally, this program builds on the research and creativity of our current faculty, building our profile as thought leaders. As such, it will allow the SOJC to continue to grow demonstrated prospective/future student recruitment. It should also strengthen our bridges with the tech industry of this region that will help us build a state, national, and international reputation as a center of excellence in immersive media communication – an area that many argue is the future of mass communication.

b. Manner in which the proposed program contributes to institutional and statewide goals for student access and diversity, quality learning, research, knowledge creation and innovation, and economic and cultural support of Oregon and its communities.

This program is designed with access, diversity, and equity at its core. Digitization and technological innovations are shaping and influencing communication disciplines in a variety of ways. These developments demand our students understand the nature and effects of digital products and assets from conceptualization to their marketing, promotion, and use. Simultaneously, the evolving needs of audiences are driving preferences for certain virtual goods/experiences and democratized systems when businesses are seeking to build better devices and interfaces that (more transparently, authentically, and ethically) communicate, interact, engage, and understand audiences.

Increasingly, Gen Z and millennials, people of color, thought leaders, and innovative corporate entities, interested in a more egalitarian and ethical technological future, are keen on investing and harvesting the opportunities provided by a decentralized, democratic immersive media also known as the metaverse; specifically, Web3. Web3 is a shrewder online network defined by emergent technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, mixed reality, and the internet of things (physical objects embedded with sensors and processing ability). It promises innovations that will advance a more evenly distributed, democratic, and more greatly decentralized future (The New York Times; Courier).

These disruptive digital trends and innovations continue to revolutionize advertising, marketing, and strategic communications. The growth of these emerging platforms was exacerbated by remote work and social isolation brought by COVID-19. As organizations and communities discover the growing importance of immersive media to find audiences, build engaged communities, and provide products and services, this program creates opportunities to train future leaders and strategists who will ethically guide its continued growth and evolution. Although this is an online program that allows attendance from anywhere in the world, our home in the "silicon forest" will also provide excellent access to industry leaders as program and student advisors as well as future employers.

- c. Manner in which the program meets regional or statewide needs and enhances the state's capacity to:**
- i. improve educational attainment in the region and state;**
 - ii. respond effectively to social, economic, and environmental challenges and opportunities; and**
 - iii. address civic and cultural demands of citizenship.**

This program is being delivered as an entirely online program, creating accessibility to students, not only in the region, but anywhere in the world. This is a professional graduate program, targeting both recent undergrads and industry professionals who need to retool their skills. Of particular interest, this program builds on the mission of the SOJC and the Oregon Reality Lab to develop and test the effects of virtual, augmented, and extended realities and their capacity to help solve social, environmental, and business problems. Providing our graduates with the powerful tools of immersive technology with a responsible use embedded in their training will also help address the civic and cultural demands of citizenship.

3. Accreditation

- a. Accrediting body or professional society that has established standards in the area in which the program lies, if applicable.**

NA

- b. Ability of the program to meet professional accreditation standards. If the program does not or cannot meet those standards, the proposal should identify the area(s) in which it is deficient and indicate steps needed to qualify the program for accreditation and date by which it would be expected to be fully accredited.**

NA

- c. If the proposed program is a graduate program in which the institution offers an undergraduate program, proposal should identify whether or not the undergraduate program is accredited and, if not, what would be required to qualify it for accreditation.**

NA

- d. If accreditation is a goal, the proposal should identify the steps being taken to achieve accreditation. If the program is not seeking accreditation, the proposal should indicate why it is not.**

NA

4. Need

- a. Anticipated fall term headcount and FTE enrollment over each of the next five years.**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
10	12	15	20	20

- b. Expected degrees/certificates produced over the next five years.**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	10	12	14	18

- c. Characteristics of students to be served (resident/nonresident/international; traditional/ nontraditional; full-time/part-time, etc.).**

Although our traditional student is a mid-career working professional from the local Portland market, this program will be marketed more broadly as an online program. We anticipate recruiting from two key audiences: 1 - undergraduate programs in advertising, public relations, marketing, and game design programs who want to build strategic thinking in this growth market; 2 - current working professionals who have been working in more traditional areas of expertise and want to elevate their career with state-of-the-art knowledge and leadership skills, prepared to guide brands and organizations into immersive strategy. We have been in direct contact with a number of undergraduate programs that are eager to direct their current students to a program such as this. For example, there is potential for collaboration with digital arts programs at both UO and across the state. Although not in Oregon, the Vancouver Film School, in British Columbia has already reached out to discuss a pathway from their undergraduate program to our potential graduate program. They

currently have such an arrangement with the London College of Communication (LCC), part of the University of the Arts London (UAL) and ranked 2nd in the world for Art and Design, according to the 2021 QS World University Rankings. One of the things that make this program truly unique is that, while there are many programs in game studies, game design, and the arts for building immersive content, there are no programs specifically focused on the strategy and effect of the use of these technologies in the field of communication.

d. Evidence of market demand.

Historical data from our existing graduate programs provide context and expectations of cohort enrollment. Our traditional graduate programs range from 12-20 students per cohort. Additionally, a market analysis of online Master's in immersive media conducted by Hanover Research identified an anticipated growth rate of 13.1% (compared to national annualized degree completions growth rates of 1.6%. Although 20 is an ideal cohort for this program, we also acknowledge the potential for a larger market than anticipated based on the growth of immersive media as communications and work platforms.

e. If the program's location is shared with another similar Oregon public university program, the proposal should provide externally validated evidence of need (e.g., surveys, focus groups, documented requests, occupational/employment statistics and forecasts).

NA

f. Estimate the prospects for success of program graduates (employment or graduate school) and consideration of licensure, if appropriate. What are the expected career paths for students in this program?

In their market analysis, Hanover Research concluded “Student and labor demand indicators for strategic communications are strong, particularly in the online space. Though immersive media is a new field for which data is limited, the industry is expected to grow, and UO Portland has the opportunity to be one of the first movers in the region.” Since this analysis, the field has grown, yet there is still no evidence of a master’s degree in communication with a focus on immersive technologies. Additionally, a content analysis of current positions (and emerging positions) in this field reveals potential post-graduation opportunities among the teams at corporations currently working in communications, at agencies representing those brands, and at the technology companies themselves. These will be immersive media strategists, content creators, and chief metaverse officers – job titles that are just emerging as social media strategists did just over a decade ago. The Oregon Reality Lab director also met recently with the North America Community Partnerships Lead at one of the world's leading social media companies who is attempting to better understand how communities form in immersive media environments. Increasingly organizations will also be seeking future community managers who can engage their audiences in the metaverse. These are the people who will be our graduates.

5. Outcomes and Quality Assessment

a. Expected learning outcomes of the program.

Principle Learning Outcome (Concept or Skill)	Part of curriculum where this learning outcome introduced	Part of curriculum where this learning outcome developed	How student learning for this outcome will be assessed
Demonstrate an understanding of immersive media with a particular focus on immersive VR, AR, and XR experiences	Intro to IMC course and media psychology course	Every course is designed to build on this knowledge from a unique perspective	Papers and projects required for each class as well as in their final project/paper/or internships
Clearly define key attributes of augmented (AR), virtual (VR), and cross reality (XR) important to communication and its potential use	Intro to immersive media and experiential marketing course	Again, each course builds on the knowledge base for this learning outcome	Proof of mastery will be demonstrated in proposals developed as part of the coursework.
Consider appropriate and measurable communication outcomes for targeted publics using AR/VR/XR/VWs	Intro to IMC course, UX and Research courses	UX, Research, and building electives	Final projects/papers will incorporate measurement strategies.
Demonstrate creativity in approaching communications solutions using immersive technologies	Intro to IMC	Reinforced in all courses	Final papers/projects in specific courses and in their capstone projects or internships
Articulate ethical, best practices in AR/VR/XR and VWs	Intro to IMC and Digital Ethics classes	Reinforced in all courses with particular focus in the ethics course	Each paper/project developed in this course will require an ethics reflection.

b. Methods by which the learning outcomes will be assessed and used to improve curriculum and instruction.

As a regular part of program assessment, faculty will meet to discuss student progress on achieving expected learning outcomes. Curricula and outcomes will be revised based on faculty assessment of student progress.

c. Nature and level of research and/or scholarly work expected of program faculty; indicators of success in those areas.

Our current faculty are very actively engaged in the content of our course offerings but in teaching and in research. Creating a cohort of graduate students focused on the industry strategic application of these technologies will also provide opportunities for additional collaboration both in lab research as well as in applied industry research.

6. Program Integration and Collaboration

a. Closely related programs in this or other Oregon colleges and universities.

There are no closely related programs in Oregon as this degree is at the forefront of an emerging area. Although there are game design and building programs at the community college and undergraduate level at a number of universities, we were unable to identify any graduate programs like this proposed program. The closest found were the CITI program housed at PSU and the Digital Communication Arts program at OSU.

b. Ways in which the program complements other similar programs in other Oregon institutions and other related programs at this institution. Proposal should identify the potential for collaboration.

NA

c. If applicable, proposal should state why this program may not be collaborating with existing similar programs.

NA

d. Potential impacts on other programs.

NA

7. External Review

If the proposed program is a graduate level program, follow the guidelines provided in *External Review of New Graduate Level Academic Programs* in addition to completing all of the above information.

The External Review was completed in Winter 2022 term.

Revised May 2016



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Program Approval Format for HECC Docket Submission

Consent Agenda Sentence

The University of Oregon seeks the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission approval to offer an instructional program leading to a Master of Science in Immersive Media.

Program Description and Justification

1. Identify the institution, degree, and title of the program.

University of Oregon, Master of Science in Immersive Media

2. Describe the purpose and relationship of the proposed program to the institution's mission and strategic plan.

The anticipated program would be a new one-year 46-credit online applied professional master's program in Immersive Media Communication (IMC) that strengthens the future of the School of Journalism and Communication and its program offerings. The program would be an excellent complement to the existing Strategic Communication and Multimedia Journalism master's programs and would also build on the work of the Oregon Reality Lab. Such a program will set us apart as innovators and leaders in the emergent communication technology landscape. We propose to create an entirely online program that will give students the skills they need to become *communication strategists* in the steadily evolving field of immersive media.

In a commissioned market analysis by Hanover Research for the School of Journalism and Communication concluded, "Student and labor demand indicators for strategic communications are strong, particularly in the online space. Though immersive media is a new field for which data is limited, the industry is expected to grow, and UO has the opportunity to be one of the first movers in the region." Since this analysis, the field has experienced enormous growth. According to *Insider Intelligence*, augmented and virtual reality (just two examples of immersive media) have "entered the mainstream" with more than a quarter of the US population using AR and a fifth using VR. Similarly, another study found more than half of Gen Z gamers (our future students) reported a desire to earn money in the "metaverse" with a third of them hoping to build a career there. However, to our knowledge, there is still no graduate degree in communication with a focus on the strategic and responsible use of immersive technologies. The IMC program could thus truly be the first of its kind. Additionally, this program builds on the research and creativity of our current faculty, building our profile as thought leaders. As such, it will allow the SOJC to continue to grow demonstrated prospective/future student recruitment. It should also strengthen our bridges with the tech industry of this region that will help us build a state, national, and international reputation as a center of excellence in immersive media communication – an area that many argue is the future of mass communication.

3. What evidence of need does the institution have for the program?

The 2019 market analysis by Hanover Research, also identified only one school/university across the U.S. (University of Florida) with an online master's program that offers a concentration in "digital strategy" that also claims to be the "first of its kind." The UF program's course offerings focus on marketing, advertising, and social media ROI, copywriting, and lead generation, yet offers no mention of immersive or emergent communication technologies. Additionally, Hanover concluded "Student and labor demand indicators for strategic communications are strong, particularly in the online space. Though immersive media is a new field for which data is limited, the industry is expected to grow, and UO has the opportunity to be one of the first movers in the region." Since this analysis, use of immersive technologies, including the so-called "metaverse" have exploded. According to Fortune Business Insights, projected growth of the global metaverse market will go from \$100.27 billion in 2022 to \$1,527.55 billion by 2029. Although there are programs that have virtual reality labs and teach courses on the use of these tools in engineering, healthcare, manufacturing, gaming, entertainment, and Arizona State's new program in journalistic storytelling in Los Angeles, there is still no evidence of a graduate degree program in communication with the focus of immersive technologies as communication strategy.

We expect this new degree has the potential to attract new students to the UO as opposed to students who might switch from other UO programs. We would be recruiting students from undergraduate game studies/game design and augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) programs across the world as well as people from the game industry who may want to work in the game development field but would like to take the skills they have and pivot into strategy and management of these skills in the communications field--positions such as "Chief Metaverse Officer" at companies like Nike, which has just created NIKELAND in a game platform called Roblox. On Nike's website for NIKELAND, they posture the platform as an experiential communications strategy. The website claims, "There's a new place on Roblox for Nike fans to connect, create, share experiences and compete: NIKELAND. Nike created this bespoke world with the backdrop of its world headquarters and inside Roblox's immersive 3D space, building on its goal [to turn sport and play into a lifestyle](#)." This is just one example of a brand jumping into these immersive media technologies to reach audiences and position the company as inclusive, playful, and of course, they're selling product there as well. It's the growth of brands in these platforms that is also demanding advertising, marketing, and public relations professionals also better understand how to engage in these platforms that set the foundation of Web3.

Current strategic communications professionals will also be an active target of recruitment for this program. SOJC Portland faculty recently trained a global communications team at a Fortune 100 company who recognized the need to identify the gaps in what they're doing and how to harness the power of immersive media in their work. More than 200 employees attended the four-part training. We are already scheduled to speak with a number of agencies also interested in learning more. Each of their employees are potential students for this program.

The potential post-graduation career opportunities for graduates are among the teams at corporations currently working in communications, at agencies representing those brands, and at the technology companies themselves. These will be immersive media strategists, content creators, and chief metaverse officers – job titles that are just emerging as social media strategists

did just over a decade ago. The Oregon Reality Lab director also met recently with the North America Community Partnerships Lead at Meta (formerly Facebook) who is attempting to better understand how communities form in immersive media environments. Increasingly organizations will also be seeking the future community managers who can engage their audiences in these immersive environments. These are the people who will be our graduates.

4. Are there similar programs in the state? If so, how does the proposed program supplement, complement, or collaborate with those programs?

In a search of similar programs in community colleges and universities throughout the state, numerous institutions offer degrees in affiliated professions to the proposed program. Because digital communication and game environments have been established industries with outstanding career paths for many years, there are a number of BFA programs in Design and/or Digital Arts and/or Communications at several of Oregon's institutions of higher education. Likewise, there are BFA programs in Game Design and BS and AS degrees in Computer Science at both the university and community college level. The Portland State University Art Department offers an MS and Ph.D. program in game design in addition to several A.A. and A.S. programs across the state in computer science that include game development and design. The two most closely aligned programs identified included the Digital Communication Arts program at Oregon State University and the independent Creative and Emergent Technology Institute (CETI) non-profit program housed at Portland State. In communication with Colin Hesse, Director of the OSU College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Hesse wrote, "it is possible that a few elements of those topics will bleed into the new MA/MS program that our School is starting next year. That would be more along the lines of a class here and there, but the MA/MS is set up in more of an academic graduate program, so I still don't imagine we would really be talking about a lot of overlap there at all." Similarly, in correspondence with Nandini Ranganathan, Founder and President of CETI, she confirmed their program could "serve as a resource for your program and community" but is not in competition as they do not offer a degree program. Both respondents expressed an interest in future collaboration.

We have identified the proposed program as an excellent path for undergraduates in the above mentioned programs who find a crowded field in the games industry or a void in the agency business. Immersive media communication is creating a new path for professionals in the fields of gaming and creative agencies who have the technical understanding of content and platform programming and creation and want to transition into the strategist role for industry and agencies increasingly facing the evolution of immersive environments and technologies for enterprise application. Graduates from game studies/design, advertising, public relations, marketing, and the arts would be excellent potential recruitment sources for the future students for this program. As an example, the Vancouver Film School in British Columbia has expressed an interest in developing a pathway from their undergraduate program to our potential graduate program. They currently have such an arrangement with the London College of Communication (LCC), part of University of the Arts London (UAL) and ranked 2nd in the world for Art and Design, according to the 2021 QS World University Rankings.

We have also already experienced outstanding collaborative opportunities within the University of Oregon with our interdisciplinary experimental course offerings in the Oregon Reality Lab. These courses have filled with students from the Oregon Executive MBA, Architecture, Historic

Preservation, Sports Product Management, Sports Product Design, Cinema Studies, Planning, Public Policy and Management, and across the SOJC programs.

In a separate paragraph, include the following sentence:

All appropriate University committees and the Statewide Provosts Council have approved the proposed program. The [University of Oregon](#) Board of Trustees approved the program on May 19, 2022.

Recommendation to the Commission

The Statewide Provosts Council recommends that the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission authorize [the University of Oregon](#) to establish an instructional program leading to a [Master of Science in Immersive Media](#), effective Fall 2023.

Note: A signature page showing how the provosts voted on the program will need to be submitted along with this write-up.

Revised May 2016

Institution: University of Oregon
Program: MS in Immersive Media

Action: At the **August 4, 2022** meeting, the Statewide Provosts Council approved a new program for **University of Oregon, MS in Immersive Media** to move forward to the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission for its review and approval. The **University of Oregon** Board of Trustees approved the **MS in Immersive Media** program at its **May 19, 2022** meeting.

Eastern Oregon University

Dr. Matt Seimears, Interim Provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Oregon State University

Ed Feser, Provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Portland State University

Susan Jeffords, Provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



University of Oregon

Patrick Phillips, Provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Oregon Health & Science University

Marie Chisholm-Burns, Provost

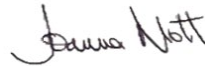
Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Oregon Tech

Joanna Mott, Provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Southern Oregon University

Susan Walsh, Provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Western Oregon University

Rob Winningham, Provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained

